

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE POSS DUPE

PAGE 01 BERLIN 06609 020635Z

10
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 DHA-02 /063 W

----- 080540

R 011515Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3178

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION USBERLIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BERLIN 6609

E O 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GE, GW

SUBJ: LUTHERAN PASTOR'S DEATH STIRS WATCHFULNESS IN GDR GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: OFFICIAL GDR REACTION TO THE RECENT ATTEMPT AT SELF-IMMOLATION BY A LUTHERAN PASTOR IS FURTHER TESTIMONY THAT THE GDR AUTHORITIES ARE EVER WATCHFUL ABOUT INTERNAL SECURITY. A NEUES DEUTSCHLAND EDITORIAL OF AUGUST 31 ATTEMPTS TO DIFFUSE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL HOSTILITY TOWARD THE GDR GOVERNMENT AS A RESULT OF THE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.

2. THE WIDELY-REPORTED ATTEMPT ON AUGUST 18 AT SELF-IMMOLATION, AND THE SUBSEQUENT DEATH A WEEK LATER, OF LUTHERAN PASTOR OSKAR BRUESEWITZ OF ZEITZ NEAR LEIPZIG, HAS CAUSED A GOOD DEAL OF CONCERN WITHIN EAST GERMAN OFFICIAL RANKS. ACCORDING TO WESTERN PRESS REPORTS, THE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 BERLIN 06609 020635Z

PASTOR ATTEMPTED TO CALL ATTENTION BY HIS ACTION TO THE PLIGHT OF THE CLERGY IN EAST GERMANY WHO ARE RESTRICTED

IN THEIR MINISTRY BY OFFICIAL INTERFERENCE, AND
ESPECIALLY TO HIS CONTENTION THAT YOUTH ARE HELD DOWN
BY THE GDR REGIME.

3. EVIDENCE OF GDR OFFICIAL CONCERN APPEARED AUGUST 31
IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND THROUGH PUBLICATION OF A LONG EDITORIAL
ENTITLED, "THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS". IT
DESCRIBED THE PASTOR AS "ABNORMAL" AND NOT IN COMPLETE
CONTROL OF HIS SENSES. IN SUPPORT OF THIS CONTENTION,
THE EDITORIAL DETAILED A NUMBER OF "UNUSUAL" ACTIONS TAKEN
BY PASTOR BRUESEWITZ IN CARRYING OUT HIS MINISTRY, INCLUDING
THE INTRODUCTION OF ANIMALS INTO HIS SERVICES AND ATTEMPTS
TO BRIBE CHILDREN TO ATTEND CHURCH. THE EDITORIAL BLAMES
SOME CHURCH LEADERS IN WEST GERMANY AND THE WEST GERMAN
MASS MEDIA FOR BLOWING THE ATTEMPTED SELF-IMMOLATION OUT
OF ALL PROPORTION. THEIR MOTIVE FOR DOING SO, ACCORDING
TO ND, IS TO TARNISH THE GROWING INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION
OF THE GDR GAINED THROUGH ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND
SPORTS SUCCESSES. THE WEST GERMAN MASS MEDIA ARE
SINGLED OUT FOR MAKING USE OF THIS TRAGIC EVENT TO "CYNICALLY"
DISCREDIT THE GDR BY PORTRAYING THE PASTOR'S ACTION AS
"BEARING WITNESS" AGAINST THE GDR REGIME AND EAST
GERMAN SOCIETY.

4. THE ND EDITORIAL WAS PUBLISHED ALMOST TWO WEEKS AFTER
THE ATTEMPTED SELF-IMMOLATION. IF FOLLOWED A WEEK,
PUBLICATION IN ND OF A STATEMENT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH
LEADERSHIP IN MAGDEBURG WHICH SAID THAT THE CHURCH COULD
NOT CONDONE THE PASTOR'S ACTION AND REGRETTED THAT SUCH
ACTS COULD NOT BE FORESEEN AND STOPPED BY CHURCH
AUTHORITIES. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION NEWSPAPER,
NEUE ZEIT, PUBLISHED ON AUGUST 31 A MIXTURE OF THE ARGU-
MENTS USED BY THE MAGDEBURG CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND THE ND
EDITORIAL. NEUE ZEIT SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE WEST GERMAN
MASS MEDIA FOR "SHAMELESSLY" USING THE PASTOR'S ATTEMPTED
SUICIDE TO BROADCAST THE "LOWEST KIND OF LIES" ABOUT
THE GDR. IN CONCLUDES THAT THE GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHURCH WHICH IS SOUGHT AFTER IN
OTHER SOCIETIES IN "REALITY" IN THE GDR.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 BERLIN 06609 020635Z

5. COMMENT: THE HEAVY PLAY GIVEN TO THIS INCIDENT BY
THE WESTERN MEDIA IN THE WEEK AFTER IT OCCURRED, UNDOUBTEDLY
PLAYED A ROLE IN CONVINCING GDR AUTHORITIES TO GO ON
RECORD AGAINST THE PORTRAYAL OF BRUESEWITZ AS A "MARTYR"
OF RESISTANCE TO THE GDR REGIME. IT IS, HOWEVER, ALSO
ASSUMED THAT THE PASTOR'S ATTEMPTED SUICIDE HAS HAD
REPERCUSSIONS WITHIN GDR SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY AMONG
CHRISTIANS AND YOUTH. THE APPEARANCE OF THE ND
EDITORIAL AT A TIME WHEN WESTERN PRESS COVERAGE HAD FALLED

OFF LEADS TO THE BELIEF THAT THE ND EDITORIAL SERVED
AT LEAST A DUAL PURPOSE, TO RESPOND TO WESTERN PRESS
ATTACKS AND TO DEAL WITH ANY UNREST AMONG THE GDR POPULACE
WHICH THE INCIDENT MAY HAVE STIRRED.

6. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE GDR REGIME TAKES
SERIOUSLY INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF DEFIANCE LIKE THAT OF PASTOR
BRUESEWITZ. CHURCH SOURCES IN WEST BERLIN HAVE TOLD
OFFICIALS OF THE WEST GERMAN REPRESENTATION HERE THAT A
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE POLITBUERO WAS CALLED SHORTLY AFTER
THE INCIDENT TO CONSIDER POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION. IT
IS SPECULATED THAT THE POLITBURERO HAS FAR MORE CONCERN
OVER POSSIBLE INTERNAL REPERCUSSIONS THAN OVER THOSE
OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. WHILE AWARE OF THE DAMAGE WHICH
THIS INCIDENT COULD CAUSE TO THE GDR'S HARD-EARNED
INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, THE GDR'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
IS EVER WATCHFUL OF EVENTS INSIDE THE COUNTRY WHICH MAY
PRESAGE INTERNAL DISSENT. IT IS COMMON WISDOM HERE THAT
THE GDR GOVERNMENT TOOK FULL COGNIZANCE OF THE UNREST IN
POLAND IN JUNE WHICH WAS TRIGGERED BY A THREATENED
INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES, FOR ANY POSSIBLE SPILL-OVER
EFFECT ON THE GDR. ALSO, IT IS BELIEVED THAT WHILE
HIGH GDR OFFICIALS WOULD LIKE TO PREVENT FURTHER BORDER
INCIDENTS, THEY HAVE SHOWN NO INDICATION OF WILLINGNESS
TO LOOSEN INTERNAL SECURITY CONTROLS. THE HEAVILY
SECURITY-ORIENTED AUGUST 13 COMMEMORATION OF THE BERLIN
WALL SUPPORTS, IN PART, THE CONTENTION OF GOVERNMENT
CONCERN WITH INTERNAL ORDER. THE ND EDITORIAL OF AUGUST 31
REPRESENTS ANOTHER OCCASION FOR THE GDR TO DEFEND ITSELF
AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD "INTERFERE" IN INTERNAL GDR
MATTERS. IT SERVES AS WELL AS A WARNING TO THOSE WHO WOULD
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 BERLIN 06609 020635Z

PROMOTE INTERNAL DISSENT.COOPER

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, DEATHS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BERLIN06609
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760332-1305
From: BERLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197609103/aaaadkoi.tel
Line Count: 152
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <02 AUG 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LUTHERAN PASTOR'S DEATH STIRS WATCHFULNESS IN GDR GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GC, GE, (BRUESEWITZ, OSKAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006